



May 15, 2019

KATE BROWN  
Governor

The Honorable David Bernhardt, Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Bernhardt:

As the Governor of the State of Oregon, I am writing to clarify and correct a position outlined in a May 9, 2019 letter from the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW) that the State of Oregon and its agencies do not support the delisting of wolves from the federal Endangered Species Act across their range in the 48 contiguous states.

The success of wolf recovery in Oregon is unquestioned. Wolves, eliminated from Oregon by the late 1940s, have returned. As documented by the ODFW, their numbers exceed the minimum documented population of at least 137. At various times Oregon's wolf recovery plan has been lauded as a national model. Our state agencies invest significant general fund dollars in wolf recovery and compensate for depredation.

I appreciate the documentation of the significant successes our fish and wildlife agency has described in its letter. However, I have notified the Department and am herein informing you that the conclusion that Oregon or its agencies support delisting the wolf based on our own success is incorrect.

In Oregon, we have a long tradition of working collaboratively on complex issues of natural resource management. Oregon developed the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds in an effort to catalyze habitat restoration and retain management authority for salmonid species. Our sage-grouse conservation plan relies on collaboration, voluntary action, and binding commitments that help restore an iconic species whose population is challenged across the West. Wolves are different. Unlike salmonid and sage-grouse, the principal reason for the decline of the wolf across the Western United States was deliberate extirpation. We are not yet far enough from that cultural history to warrant confidence that wolf recovery is inevitable.

Our collaborative work and its success cannot protect imperiled wildlife beyond our borders in other states. Our commitment to the Oregon way gives me great confidence that wolves are on the path to recovery and do not warrant a listing within Oregon, but their listing under the federal Endangered Species Act affords them some protection across their range.

Oregon supports the current federal listing status for gray wolves, and opposes delisting. Our state investments should be mirrored by other states that can help lead to recovery of the species across a significant portion of its historic range. These animals are wide-ranging, and as Oregon's wolves venture into California and return, they warrant the protection of the federal Endangered Species Act during their peregrinations.

I appreciate the collaborative partnership that federal and state wildlife agencies employ when managing the state's wildlife and I thank you for acknowledging this correction to the position of the State of Oregon.

Sincerely,

Governor Kate Brown

